

27 August, 1952

STAT

TO: [redacted], Office of Training, Room 1301, "I" Building

Subject: Evaluation of South East Asia Program

I feel scarcely qualified to offer sound criticism of the recent area program on South East Asia as my attendance at lectures was limited to five or six scattered occasions and I could not therefore form a picture of the program as a whole. This sporadic attendance, due in part to heat dismissals, in part to the exigencies of the office work load, itself suggests two possible improvements in programming that might be effected.

- (1) Is it possible to avoid scheduling the summer programs during the heart of the summer heat? If not, perhaps the lectures could at least be held in somewhat less enervating quarters - the ones I attended were scheduled in a windowless room.
- (2) The desirability of unbroken attendance at lectures might be stressed more heavily to supervisors. While some compromise with office requirements is inevitable, the fact that each lecture, properly, was not a separate entity but a continuation of or a prelude to the other lectures put a premium on regular attendance.

I feel that programs such as this can be of definite value to the analyst. They afford him both an opportunity for and a stimulation to do more reading in the area; they give him a chance to get the flavor of an area from people who have had the intimate personal experience in the area he so often lacks; and a properly balanced program can afford both a better background against which he can weigh the day to day fragments he receives and some expert guidance as to the significance of contemporary trends in the area.

The two hour session seemed quite satisfactory but I feel that the scope of this program, in view of the time allotted, was overambitious. "South East Asia" is a large subject to cover in 40 hours and either superficiality of treatment or restriction of subject matter was inevitable. The lecturers I listened to had to and did seize one or the other horns of this dilemma and their lectures suffered as a consequence. Where restriction of subject matter was resorted to, I felt the choice made was often dictated more by the lecturers' interests than by a consideration of the agency's requirements. A considerable amount of time, for example, was spent on periods of time ranging from the medieval to the prehistoric. It seems to me that the student should expect to rely on outside reading for most of the needed historical background for a condensed course of this kind and that the lecturers should devote their limited time to a brief pointing up of main trends and to information less readily obtainable in textbooks. I feel then, that either the scope of such programs should be narrowed (with their areas of interest more closely defined in relation to agency interests) or their length must be extended.

Perhaps a screening process to ensure a more uniform degree of expertise (or lack thereof) in the members of a class might aid the lecturers in planning their talks - several of them seemed baffled by the problem of what level they should pitch their talks at.

Discussion in the lectures I attended was notable by its absence. The advantage that resulted of allowing the lecturers to cover more territory was outweighed I believe, by the obvious disadvantages of such a one way exchange, yet none of the lecturers while I was there invited comment or question. I think both encouragement of "from the floor" questions and the setting aside of a limited question period at the end of each lecture would have enriched the program.

I feel that it is not unreasonable to expect a certain amount of collateral reading from participants in such a course, though I question whether devotion of enough time to one particular subject to turn out a worthwhile paper is justified in a program where the object is the absorption of the maximum amount of information in the minimum period of time.

Respectfully submitted,



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